

witness to the unexpected horrible tragedy of the anti-Sikh riots. Singh wrote about every subject that has moved him. His friends and family, and his identity as a Sikh; all get a place in his fiction. The state of correct versus incorrect which Singh presents throughout the novel are numerous, including those of what one should do when one has the chance to curb something bad, when an action of goodwill is truly worthwhile, and how much significance is the consciousness of the bad. Train to Pakistan, with its numberless gruesome and explicit accounts of Violence, Death, Torture, and Rape for the public to read, makes the case that people do need to know about the evil. Thus, the division has left many scars in the hearts of Indians and those tragic days still torment us and the memories of that unforgettable tragedy still makes people palpitate and quiver, are brought lively through a great historic novel by Khushwant Singh. The dreadful and atrocious memories of the annihilation are still fresh in minds of everyone. The novel by Khushwant Singh even being a work of fiction is very near to realism in terms of the scenes and plot that are created and portrayed. The novel Train to Pakistan has an expression that is quite heart-rending and touches the core of the heart dolefully. This novel is must essentially be read by all, those who want to get a brief look of what had occurred as consequence of one of the most depressing and disheartening episodes of not just in the history of India but also in the human history.

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Rethinking Subaltern: An Outsiders Perspective on *Slumdog Millionaire*

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Abstract: Mumbai, the major cinematic city of India is unarguably the most recognizable metropolitan city of India. The city is basically known as the financial hub of the country and above all the entertainment industry. Mumbai, allegorically speaking can be distinguished into the centre and the margin. The centre of the city is neat and better constructed and the “other” part resides in the periphery of the city which is haphazard, orderless and largely consists of slums that gives Mumbai a vital part of its character. As the “centre” cannot exist without the “periphery”, these slums are now the shadow of the main Mumbai as both leach on each other despite their economic and social asymmetry. *Slumdog Millionaire* gives a balanced view of Mumbai and represents the city in realistic categories of economy, class, religion and migrants.

Keywords: *Slumdog*, cinematic city, marginalized, subaltern, Mumbai.

Film in India has had a powerful public presence and significance since the post-independent era. The rapid expansion of India cities and urbanism of lifestyle has been extremely large and Indian films have not only represented the process of modernization and urbanization, but also the struggle and reaction towards the agendas of modernity. Films propagate these agendas in the form of contestation, negotiation and asserting control over modern urban culture and politics. In my paper I plan to analyze the cinematic city of Mumbai and through the selected film *Slumdog Millionaire*, I will reconfigure and re-assess the representation of Mumbai from the perspective of an outsider and in this case, Danny Boyle (director of the film). The Mumbai film industry has created a space for itself around the world. Along with Indian diasporic audiences, Hindi films attract non-western audiences in Eastern Europe, Africa, Russia, Middle East. The films are the only connection for the diasporic families with the homeland and thus helps connect with Indian society, culture and politics. Akbar S. Ahmed in “Mumbai Films: The Cinema as Metaphor for Indian Society and Politics” (1992) compares cinema to the realities of life. He mentions that “Eclecticism and syncretism are dynamics of Indian cinema. Like life, the cinema suggests, societies are part real and part false.” (290). Despite the western influence, Hindi cinema has maintained a unique identity. This uniqueness makes it a vital part of popular culture and a crucial space for

cultural interpretation. Despite the overarching influence of Indian culture, Hindi cinema's style is contrasting to the everyday reality. The film dialogues, costumes, sets, exotic settings, lavish song and dances are in disjunction from the familiar surroundings. The film *Slumdog Millionaire* (2008) directed by Danny Boyle won multiple-Oscar and is adapted from the novel *Q & A* (2005) written by the Indian diplomat-turned writer, Vikas Swarup. A film, as a part of cultural practices, is a site of representation that could be seen as a battleground of multiple meanings. The denotative and connotative meanings in the films are constructed using the medium of cinematography. But, when the film is representing a culture which is unfamiliar for the intended audience, the whole process of meaning making at the connotative level is significant because this step might discover the film's preferred meaning. In the prologue of the novel, eighteen year old Ram Mohammad Thomas, a dweller in Asia's biggest slum Dharavi, is accused of cheating by the producers of the show *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*. Ram Mohammad Thomas has never been to school, and appearing to be neither intelligent or genius, the young man could not have answered the questions of the quiz on the basis of his intelligence and become the winner of the show. The organizers of the show bring charges against Ram and the host of the show, Prem Kumar, their accomplice and a crook himself, is the one who turns the boy over to the police and gets him tortured to extract a guilty confession. Thus, Ram unfolds the entire truth of his story through episodic flashbacks and vignettes. The answers are unapparent at first and logically, bring to fore, the natural conclusions of life's tortuous chain of events. The film *Slumdog Millionaire* treads similar path and opens with a powerful scene of a perplexed policeman and a constable, puffing cigarette smoke on to Jamal Malik's face and interrogating Jamal on his surprise win. He states, "What can a slumdog possibly know? How did he do it?" This opening scene establishes the spatial fracture in an urbane living where police is both disciplinary and a threat to the dispossessed. Jamal can be arrested and erased by state factory as much as by the mafia or criminals.

Like the quiz show itself, the audience is offered four answers to choose from: "A) He cheated, B) He is lucky, C) He is a genius, D) It is written." It appears that his particular life history provides him with the knowledge he needs, as if his whole life had been leading to the questions on this show and his winning twenty million rupees. Thus, destiny appears to be the correct answer. This answer adds to the possibility that his prodigious intellectual gifts are taking Jamal Malik forward to a potential fortune. The game-show format of the film also invites the fantasy of the globally shared belief system of audiences and this belief system enables universal identification of the audiences with the storyline and the protagonist

Jamal Malik.

The *mise en scene* of the film reflects life in Dharavi, Asia's largest slum about five hundred and twenty acres, existing in the heart of Mumbai. In large parts of India, people today are poorer than they were half a century ago. Poverty has not been linear, but has been marked by material improvement. The advent of Globalization has been described as a form of hegemony that fosters media and cultural imperialism. Western media, for its own reasons has portrayed India in poor light. Indian metropolitan cities are often projected through filthy slums encapsulated in beggary, corruption, crime, prostitution, communal tension and drug trade. But it is notable that such evils exist in every slum of the major metropolitan cities of the world. The visual representation of poverty creates an imaginary boundary between the East and the West. Poverty becomes a major face for the East as development and modernization symbolizes the West. The superiority to distinguish and to generalize the rest of the third world is one of the characteristic of the first world media. Edward Said's in the canonical text *Orientalism* (1978) critiques the construction of third world identity and argues that :

Orientalism is not that it is a misrepresentation of some oriental essence, but that it operates, as representations usually do, for a purpose, according to a tendency, in a specific historical, intellectual and even economic setting. In other words, representations have purposes, they are effective much of time, they accomplish one or many tasks. (273)

Slumdog Millionaire is an eye opener to the global phenomenon of deterritorialized populations, as the film universally communicates across various boundaries of culture, geography, language and economy. Reflecting upon the global issues through the characters from Mumbai, the film reflects the basic characteristics of human nature and the immediate world that surrounds them. The protagonist Jamal Malik enters the game show, *Who Wants to be a Millionaire*, not only to escaping poverty, but also for unification with his unrequited childhood love Latika. Danny Boyle introduces the film through a series of flashbacks. The audience follows Jamal's life from early childhood up till his present day at the police station. Through the picaresque adventure of Jamal and his older brother Salim; they survive against the odds of the hostile world, of the characters. Danny Boyle is successful in interweaving the elements of their personal lives to every question in the game show. The first question that appears on the quiz show is, "Who was the star in the 1973 hit film *Zanjeer*?" In a split second the scene ends and a young Jamal is picturized on the screen. Jamal is seated inside a public toilet that is owned by their family and Salim's job is to collect the money from the toilet users. This scene also introduces the landscape of a slum area near the airport where the boys play open air cricket. A middle aged man

desperately wants to use the public toilet and offers Salim money, but Jamal lazily dismisses the pleading man and Salim. At this point there is much raucous and noise outside about the arrival of a helicopter with the mega superstar Amitabh Bachchan. Salim gets his revenge on Jamal by locking the door of the public toilet from the outside, while he himself runs off to see the film star. With no way out, undaunted Jamal pulls out a picture of Amitabh Bachchan and dives into the bowels of an outhouse to make his escape. Slime covered Jamal runs through the crowd and presents the photograph of Amitabh Bachchan for his autograph. The superstar jovially signs the autograph and this excrement covered, victorious young boy, provides the most memorable image of *Slumdog Millionaire*. The police are also noticeable in the background of the picture. Hence state, police becomes an extension of disciplining the fans, admirers and not just citizens for ordinary recognition or chasing the criminals. Geographically and economically, Dharavi is a conglomerate of marginal huts, shanty streets and *jhuggis* located on the periphery of Mumbai. The first tannery was opened in 1887 and now numerous small industries are located in the Slum, many connected to the global market of Europe. These small scale industries produce items of leather and in India, leather is considered to be ritually impure by the Hindu community because it is connected with the slaughter of cattle. Historically and traditionally, only people from low castes would be leather workers, and, in addition to Muslims, Dharavi is mainly inhabited by low castes; today called Dalits. Danny Boyle has represented Dharavi as a space that connotes stereotypes of marginalization, lack of culture and deprivation. These characteristics certainly do not justify this complex and complicated space or the like of its inhabitants. The scene of Hindu-Muslim communal violence in Dharavi is presented from the perspective of young Salim, Jamal and Latika.

The scene opens with children Salim and Jamal under the patronage and guidance of their mother, enjoying a normal day at the dhobi ghat. A familiar overcrowded train rushes over the slum supervised by painful outcry of people. In a series of shots that cut between mother's face, her sons and the train tracks, the camera captures her expressions shifting from motherly affection to attentiveness. At this point, there is an intentional fading away of sound to arouse suspense amongst the audience. By the time Jamal's mother comprehends the situation, a Hindu flash mob with ruthless intentions and swords are rampaging towards the peaceful space. This mob of Hindu men shouting "kill the muslims" vandalize and kill whatever comes in their way. This communal riot consumes the family of the young Dharavi musketeers. The scene changes and shifts towards the show where Jamal is facing Prem Kumar's

question on religion. In depictions of God Rama, he is holding what in his right hand? a) A flower b) A sword c) A child d) A bow and arrow? While following the orders of their mother, Jamal and Salim come across a young terrified boy dressed as Lord Rama and the last sentence of the film “it is destiny” resonates more relevantly. For the western viewers, this scene explains why the boys left the slum, nevertheless the reason of the riot remains completely obscure to the uninformed western audiences as this statement is also applicable to young Jamal, Salim and Latika. After fleeing away from the clutches of evil Maman, Jamal is depressed over abandoning Latika. Jamal stares into the horizon while sitting atop of the train's roof. Danny Boyle cuts to an extreme long shot of the boy's on the train's roof with their fists in the air. He further moves to a montage of the young protagonists selling fruits on various trains and collecting money. For Boyle, the train appears as his protagonist's salvation and a technique of including the shots of Indian landscapes. The train symbolizes a globalized worldview and reinstates the most potent symbols of Britain's lingering colonial influence over India by bridging its Indian setting with a transnational view. “Do you want to see the real India?” This question is asked by young Jamal to an American tourist. On a larger context this epitomizes, the readiness of the observers of the Western world. The American tourists want to experience the rich culture of India, but what they experience is a boy being thrashed by their driver. They compensate the experience in their own way by giving the boy a hundred dollar and expressing their superiority by saying “and this is the real America”. The visual metaphor of the dollar as a trope for escape from unenlightenment is powerfully reiterated time and time again. We first hear about the verbal voice-over at the scene of the quiz show, “On an American One hundred dollar bill, there is a portrait of which American Statesmen?” So the real India on which Boyle concentrates is a country of poverty, injustice and violence. Of course poverty attracts tourists from Europe, North America or any other part of the world, it is no surprise that thematically the film focuses in this aspect. Perhaps this question is also addressed to the native Indians. Although poverty is omnipresent in India's burgeoning metropolitan cities, with thousands begging, living and sleeping on the streets. At the same time this is an ordinary phenomenon, and is invisible to the local eye. In India, children working in factories, sweeping in train carriages are also unseen. There have been films about poverty and corruption in Mumbai. Films such as *Salaam Mumbai* (1988) by Mira Nair and *Dharavi* (1991) directed by Sudhir Mishra, make the unseen seeable in the urban landscape of Mumbai. *Slumdog Millionaire*, as an end product uses some specific strategies to enhance the authentic experience of real slums of India. In other words, audience is not only visually watching the

film but is also experiencing the slums in Mumbai. *Slumdog Millionaire*, uses several strategies and techniques of Italian Neo-Realism to convince the world that the Mumbai depicted on the celluloid is the real slum of India. Tom Gunning uses the term “cinema of attractions” as a way of presenting an authentic experience. Tom Gunning explains “cinema of attractions” as “a cinema that displays its visibility, willing to rupture a self-enclosed fictional world for a chance to solicit the attention of the spectator” (64). This means that cinema could be created, not only for entertainment but also to attract spectators by presenting something unique and exclusive.

In a film such as *Slumdog Millionaire*, produced purely for entertainment and amusement, the filmmaker's main preoccupation was to free it from controversies as possible and try not to offend anyone and not to speak of the post colonial sensitivities. But the term *slumdog*, provoked protests and disapproval and the Hindi version of the film title seemed untranslatable and therefore *Slumdog Crorepati*. The connotation of a dog in the Western context is ambiguous but largely it suggests an intimate beloved pet. On the other hand in India, a dog signifies a worthless animal and is considered to be impure. The title of the film was mainly seen as an insult that triggered demonstrations by slum inhabitants. Salman Rushdie in his article “A fine Pickle” views the film as a fairy tale based on morbid voyeurism, exoticism and a fairy tale based on the grim world where survival is already a fairy tale along with an extraordinary zest for life. But among all the criticisms, the multicultural; space of Mumbai is captured with authenticity and with partial documentary style of representation; the city's pulsation is grasped in its true colors. The panoramic views of burgeoning Mumbai's urban conglomeration along with its life line Dharavi, truly resembles a documentary on India. In a city of nineteen million people, hustling into the future, there is still present an ancient sense of destiny, fate chance, luck, coincidences and the device of quiz show in the films makes this fantasy and destiny cycle relive visually on the screen. Thus, the director answers the first question he had posed to the intriguing audiences; “D) It is written.”

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